Providing foster and kinship care
Support for carers
The importance of support

Being a foster or kinship carer is a challenging role with certain stresses and pressures. However, research shows that carers who feel supported:

- achieve better outcomes for children and young people in their care
- continue in their role as carers for longer periods of time
- are less likely to experience burnout.

It is important to build a network of people around you who can provide both formal and informal support.

Formal support

Formal support is provided by people or organisations with a responsibility to help and support carers. The Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services and non-government foster and kinship care services are the main providers of formal support for you as a carer.

Together with your support worker from the department or a non-government foster and kinship care service, you will identify the support you need to care for the children and young people placed with you.

These supports may include:

- home visits
- telephone calls
- information about your role and that of the department
- financial support (refer to the Prospective carer fact sheet 9: Foster and kinship care — Allowances and benefits)
- respite placements
- training
- crisis response
- access to local support groups.

You can also access support services through:

- Queensland Foster and Kinship Care and your Foster Care Advocacy Support Team delegate
- your local carer support group (speak to your child safety officer for information about carer support groups in your community).

Informal support

Informal support is as vital as formal support, although it plays a different role and is likely to come from different sources.

Informal support comes from family, friends, neighbours, other carers or community groups to help you feel cared about and emotionally supported. It may also involve practical support, such as help with household and other tasks involved in your role as a carer.

Building a support network

You can discuss with your support worker the level and types of support you need. Proactively building a support network will help you manage the challenges and demands you will face as a carer. It is important to be aware of what support is available and know how these services can be accessed.

Important contacts

Child safety service centres

The contact details for your local child safety service centre will be provided by your child safety officer or support worker. You can find a full list by calling the department’s general enquiries on 1800 811 810 or 3224 8045 or visiting www.communities.qld.gov.au/childsafety

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child Safety Services’ staff</th>
<th>Role</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child safety officer</td>
<td>Responsible for children or young people placed with you. This is the person you will have the most day-to-day contact with.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team leader</td>
<td>Supervises a team of child safety officers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>Manages the child safety service centre.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Administration officer</td>
<td>The first person you will speak to when you call a child safety service centre.</td>
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Child Safety Services’ regional offices

Each child safety service centre belongs to one of seven regions across Queensland. Regional Placement Services Units have a role in the recruitment and assessment of foster carers and kinship carers.

Your regional office may also respond to complaints that cannot be resolved by the child safety service centre.

For more information about lodging a complaint, speak to your child safety officer or call the department’s general enquiries on 1800 811 810 or 3224 8045.

The dedicated line for carers is 3235 9901. Please note — this number is not for public use. For all general enquiries, call 3235 9999 or 1800 177 135.

Foster and Kinship Carer Support Line

The department provides support to foster and kinship carers through the carer support line.

Support line staff are skilled in working with vulnerable children and provide practical information about behavioural problems, counselling and support, carer resources and information about the department.

Carers can call the support line on 1300 729 309 for the cost of a local call.
Non-government foster and kinship care services
If you are not affiliated with a non-government service, contact your local child safety service centre or PeakCare Queensland for more information.

Queensland Foster and Kinship Care represents carer interests and provides advice and support. Call 3256 6166 or visit www.fcq.com.au

Foster Care Advocacy Support Team
The Foster Care Advocacy Support Team (FAST) consists of a local delegate from Queensland Foster and Kinship Care who is part of a team of specially trained foster carers who provide support, advice and advocacy on behalf of carers. There is a FAST delegate for each child safety service centre.

Local carer support groups
Local carer support groups usually meet on a monthly basis and can provide you with support, advocacy and information. Your child safety officer or local child safety service centre can provide contact details for your local carer support group.

PeakCare Queensland
PeakCare Queensland is the peak body for non-government services working with foster carers and kinship carers. If you are interested in knowing if there is a community agency in your local area that works with foster carers or kinship carers, contact PeakCare on 3368 1050 or visit www.peakcare.com.au

Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Partnership (QATSICPP)
QATSICPP is an independent, peak body representing the safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people. Call 3362 9644.

CREATE Foundation
CREATE Foundation works to connect and empower children and young people in care and improves the care system through activities, programs, training and policy advice. Call 3255 3145 or visit www.create.org.au

Parent Help Line
Parent Help Line provides telephone counselling for parents and carers. Hours of operation are 8am to 10pm, seven days a week. Call 1300 30 1300 or visit www.parentline.com.au

Kids Help Line
Kids Help Line is a free, confidential and anonymous 24-hour telephone and online counselling service specifically for children and young people aged between five and 18 years. Call 1800 55 1800 or visit www.kidshelpline.com.au

For more information:
- call the department’s general enquiries on 1800 811 810 or 3224 8045
- visit www.communities.qld.gov.au/childsafety
- contact your local child safety service centre
- call Queensland Foster and Kinship Care on 3256 6166.